

Vandals Major Threat to Outdoors

The more visible aspect of the conservation movement is the never-ending fight to control suburban sprawl, deforestation and industrial pollution, and some important steps have been taken in that direction.

Just as important, but much less publicized, is the unenviable battle of conservationists to protect their efforts from the very users for whom they labor to preserve a piece of the outdoors. Two recently-received news releases point up the problem.

Guy Bowersox, a waterways patrolman whose jurisdiction includes southwest Berks and western Montgomery counties, recently found it necessary to utilize police assistance to protect the Black Rock boating access area on the Schuylkill River from vandalism. The facility has suffered near destruction at the hands of late-night party throwers who are using the area as a park.

From the opposite end of our readership area comes word that the Keystone Trails Association and the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club have found it necessary to protect Rausch Gap Cabin along the Appalachian Trail in Lebanon County from misuse.

The cabin is on State Game Lands 211. Special permission was required to construct the shelter, because fires and overnight camping are not normally



Field and Stream

By Bob Ballantyne

permitted on the state game lands. The building was constructed entirely by volunteers and is intended for the sole use of overnight backpackers. Groups are now using the facility for overnight parties, and leave behind substantial litter and a record of vandalism as a reminder of their presence.

Shelter System Suffers

The entire shelter system along the trail has suffered recently from this type of behavior. These shelters were built by volunteers and are spaced about one day's hiking apart along nearly the entire length of the Maine to Georgia trail. Many are abused, es-

pecially if access is available from a nearby highway.

There is an ever-growing segment of our population that deals entirely from a me-first-and-right-now value system that does not include the word "responsibility."

It reminds me of the student-rights movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and perhaps many members of this segment of society had their roots in it. They used the phrase, "Student Rights and Responsibilities," to make the movement more palatable to what was then referred to as "the establishment." Many educators to this day feel that too much emphasis was placed on rights and not enough on the fulfillment of responsibility.

The issue is further clouded by the "disposable" nature of our society. Subconsciously these destructive individuals may assume that if a trail shelter is destroyed it will simply be replaced with a prefab lean-to that volunteers will bring up the mountain.

volunteers will put up with being trash collectors for those that are defacing what little is left of wilderness in northeastern America.

If abusive individuals are turned away from these places (as the trail club intends to do), I think I can predict their reaction. It will include some ranting about "having their rights in a free country" to use public property.

They'll say nothing of their responsibility to take their litter out of the woods with them, their responsibility to protect surrounding woodlands from destruction by mismanaged fire, nothing at all about preserving the area for future use, and nothing about the responsibility to properly dispose of garbage and human waste so that the area does not become a health hazard.

But they'll have a great deal to say about their "rights."